University of Alberta

Mutton Dressed as Lamb: Clothing Aesthetics of Women Aged 70 to 84

By

Susan Nurse

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

in

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84. The sample consisted of 24 women aged 71 to 86. Data were collected through three focus groups with eight women in each group. Focus groups were audio taped and their transcripts were analyzed using strategies of categorizing and contextualizing.

Data analysis identified aesthetic attributes and revealed four inter-related contexts, which explain the significance of the attributes - identity, cohort, age and lifestyle. Aesthetics mattered to the women in the sample as a means of expressing their identity. While cohort and lifestyle influenced style, age was the primary determinant of the women's aesthetic clothing preferences.

The findings inform clothing designers and manufacturers about the aesthetic clothing preferences of this sample of women. In addition, these findings validate the women's aesthetic experience of clothing and challenge feminist arguments of older women's invisibility.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the women in my family who impressed upon me the importance of "fixing up" and to the women who, by participating in this research, helped me to understand the significance of what this meant.

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Chapter I. Introduction

Shakespeare's line, "clothes make the man" (in Hollander, 1993, p. 444) and Rupaul's phrase, "you're born naked, and the rest is drag" (in Felshin, 1994, p. 7) illustrate the signifying power of clothing. Clothing is a signifier encoded with meanings derived through social convention. Clothing, therefore, expresses one's status aspirations or one's "social identity" - the groups one belongs to and one's societal role and status (Rouse, 1989, p. 27). The aesthetic qualities of clothing facilitate the wearer's expression of herself. Aesthetic qualities or attributes include, among others, silhouette, form, proportion, colour, pattern, and texture.

In an image-conscious society, women learn from a young age that their worth is molded in their appearance (Abu-Laban & McDaniel, 1998). Feminists in western societies argue that women become invisible as they age because they lose their youthful image and their social role as nurturers declines (deBeauvoir, 1952; Greer, 1991; Steinem, 1992). Their political invisibility is symbolized in the "undesirable" and "unfashionable" clothing available to them.

As for women of all ages, it is important for older women to wear clothing that expresses their sense of individuality. Moreover, a woman's appearance and the appearance of her family have historically been within her realm of responsibility and control. In the mid-nineteenth century women were expected to monitor the family's dress to ensure the whole unit was 'keeping up the front' of prosperity and achievement (Gordon, 1992). Successfully fulfilling these expectations was paramount to the family gaining social status. The impact of these expectations profoundly shaped the psychology of women that lingers yet today. A woman's sense of self became intimately

tied to her appearance: "Dress was considered a reflection of inner character...dress was the index of conscience; it 'revealed' the inner life of heart and soul" (Gordon, 1992, p. 47).

To date, research on older women's clothing has been limited. The focus has been restricted to examining women's frustration with the technical fit of ready-to-wear clothing. While proper fit is an aesthetic consideration, there are other aspects of the experience of aesthetics in clothing, such as style, colour, and texture, that have not been adequately explored. In addition, the research is typically designed with an erroneous homogenous view of women as they age. Research samples often refer to women "over 55" as one group and fail to identify potential differences among women in their 60's, 70's and 80's.

Notwithstanding its homogeneous bias, from this research designers and manufacturers have the anthropometric information and techniques necessary to draft and construct fashionable styles in sizes appropriate for the older figure (Brinson, 1977; Gazzuolo, 1985; Heisey et al., 1986; Heisey et al., 1988; Kohn, 1996). Nonetheless, there continues to be a lack of stylish apparel manufactured for the older figure type, possibly because this age category as a market segment is smaller in size than younger cohorts. However, as a group, older women have more money to spend on clothing than younger women do. Perhaps the industry's collective inaction is a symptom and manifestation of a deeper, societal bias toward aging, in general, and aging women, in particular.

Cultural stereotypes perpetuate the notion of older women as unfashionable (DeLong et al., 1997) and uninterested in wearing fashionable clothing. Hence, there is a

need to identify the clothing aesthetics of older women. With an increasingly aging population, the apparel industry will benefit economically from this information. In addition, when older women dress in beautiful clothing - clothing that expresses their sense of self - they celebrate their acquired experience and knowledge (Greer, 1991). Subsequently, clothing can counteract stereotypical "models of old" (Steinem, 1992) and contribute to healthy "models of aging" (Steinem). Clothing, as a language, communicates social and political change; clothing, as an aesthetic object, provides an opportunity to experience personal well being. In this way, clothing embodies the feminist ethos: "the personal is political" (Koch & Dickey, 1988).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify and understand the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84.

Justification

Previous research on "older women's" clothing preferences is inconclusive for two reasons. First, women over 70 years of age have been under represented or not represented at all. Second, aesthetic considerations are absent from analysis of older women's problems of fit; they are seen as secondary instead of primary. While clothing and textiles researchers have pointed to the need to study an aging populations' aesthetic clothing preferences (Eckman, 1997; DeLong et al., 1997; Fiore et al. Part three, 1996), it is important to note that older women are not a homogeneous population. Ageist and homogeneous stereotypes of older women may lead to erroneous and incomplete conclusions regarding their aesthetic clothing preferences.

Given the aging Canadian population, understanding the clothing design preferences of older women may offer areas of future market potential for clothing designers, manufacturers and retailers. For instance, Statistics Canada projects the percentage of women over age 65 in the population will increase to 8.9% in 2016 from 7.0% in 1996, a 1.9% increase in a span of 20 years. Over this same short time frame, women aged 70 to 84, who currently make up 4.2% of the population, are expected to represent 4.7 % of the population in 2016. Moreover, this 70 to 84 age category increasingly includes more women who have earned their own income and independently purchased a considerable amount of clothing in the present consumption-oriented society. Hence, the clothing industry may benefit economically by becoming aware of the aesthetic preferences of older women.

In addition, information regarding the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84 may aid gerontologists and their study of and work with aging populations. Through the social process of appearance (Kaiser 1997), the aesthetic attributes of clothing express one's identity and in turn elicit feedback that impacts one's sense of self (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). Accordingly, clothing impacts social interaction between people. Indeed, if older women do not feel appropriately dressed, they are less likely to participate in social activities (Joyner, 1993). Yet, older women's desire to maintain an independent lifestyle is dependent upon their continued social participation (Joyner). Therefore, understanding the role of clothing in forming appearance and identity may help those in studying and working with older populations.

Finally, feminist activist and writer, Gloria Steinem (1992), encourages women to believe that the "politics of beauty" need to be taken seriously, "because it affects every

part of our lives, from our vision of who can be powerful to the comfort of our feet and the freedom of our hair" (p. 220). Since aging is one of the most universal of gender-related beauty standards, it is an effective means of silencing all women eventually (Abu-Laban & McDaniel, 1998). Therefore, not only will the study of older women's clothing aesthetics contribute to the fields of clothing design and gerontology, but it will serve a political purpose as well. Identifying and understanding the aesthetic desires of women aged 70 to 84 validates these older woman's aesthetic experience of clothing, and thereby counters ageist and sexist stereotypes of what it means to be an older woman. In this way, women can use clothing to construct their own meanings of what it means to be a woman at whatever stage of life.

Objectives

Given this research is exploratory in nature, the objectives of this study are general in scope. The objectives are to:

1. Inform clothing designers and manufacturers about the nature of aesthetics of older female consumers aged 70 to 84.
2. Understand the importance of aesthetics to the clothing of middle class women aged 70 to 84.
3. Contribute to the feminist analysis of appearance by examining the impact of age on the relationship between gender and appearance.

Definitions

1. An older woman is a woman over the age of 65.
2. Ageism is "negative and prejudicial attitudes towards older persons which are based on stereotypes" (Kenyon, 1992).

3. Aesthetics in general refers to the study of "what is beautiful to the eye, the ear, and the touch; what is valuable, desirable, and sensuous; or what is physically satisfying, gratifying, or pleasing to the individual or community" (O'Neal, 1998, p. 168).
4. With respect to clothing, aesthetics refers to the study of "how the body is clothed to be most attractive to the eye, and this is subject to time and interpretation and the values of different periods" (DeLong, 1998, p. 4).
5. Aesthetic response is a combination of sensations, symbolism, expression, ideas, moods and feelings (Fiore et al. Part one, 1996), which are experienced through the dynamic interaction of three "determinants": the form, the viewer, and the context of the viewing (DeLong, 1998, p. 11).
6. Fashion is "a look, a style, identified as what is current with the times. It is what is recognized by people of a particular era to be an expression of their time" (DeLong, 1998, p. 18).
7. Gender is "the cultural definition of behavior defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time" (Lerner, 1986, p. 238).
8. Patriarchy is "the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general" (Lerner, 1986, p. 239).
9. Self-reported health status involves reporting on one's physical ability to perform various independent tasks and one's rate of social participation (Joyner, 1993).
10. Style is defined as the unique way in which parts of a form are put together (DeLong, 1998).

Chapter II. Review of Literature

Cultural stereotypes support the notion of aging women as unfashionable (DeLong et al., 1997). In her year long ethnographic study of a small southern U.S. town, Fennell (1994) found the cultural meaning of "old" is negative, particularly among young people. The most frequently cited words to describe "old" were "slow," "gray," and "wrinkled." Old people are characterized as "sad," "suffering" and "lonely" (Paoletti, 1998). These are hardly the images the fashion industry is seeking to perpetuate, explaining the fact that older women have never been used in commercials for clothing (Kaiser, 1997). Indeed, they are not images women want to be connected with or defined by. In a study on the social production of identity, women explicitly rejected the term "older women" to refer to themselves as a group, preferring simply the word "women" to refer to themselves (Paoletti). Not only are the terms to describe women disliked by research participants, they are also a source of major problems in gerontological research because of their inconsistent application to different age categories (Spirduso, 1995). For the purposes of this study, "older women" refers to women over age 65, since age 55-64 is generally considered middle-aged (Spirduso). However, whenever possible, women will be described by their chronological age.

Most clothing research studies concerning older women have focused on their functional clothing needs in light of physical handicaps (Schuster & Kelly, 1974), or on their dissatisfaction with ready-to-wear clothing due to physiological changes they experience with aging (Kohn, 1996; Richards, 1981; Smathers & Horridge, 1979). One exception was found. Spruiell & Jernigan (1982) explored the clothing preferences of women 65 years and older. They provided no further information regarding the age of

the sample. Thirty individual interviews were conducted to elicit information regarding preference for colour, fabric design and style features. Style features were defined as skirts, silhouettes, necklines, collars and sleeves. Results revealed blue was most frequently chosen as a preferred colour (70%), followed by pink (40.0%), red (30.0%), and navy (26.7%). Solid coloured fabric was mentioned most often (90%), followed by floral (43%), printed (40%), and striped (26%). Fabric design was considered secondary to the overall style of dress. A-line and straight skirts were cited most frequently, 83.3% and 66.7% respectively, followed by gored (36.7%) and yoke (23.3%). In addition, the princess-line dress was most popular (73.3%), with the A-line and shift dresses also being chosen by "a majority of women" (no percentage of preference was provided) (p. 489). Most women chose V-neck necklines (76.7%), followed by jewel (53.3%), cardigan (53.3%), and scoop necklines (50.0%). The convertible collar was preferred most (76.7%), followed by shawl (46.7%), tie (43.3%), and mandarin collars (30.0%). Long sleeves with a cuff were the most popular sleeve style chosen (83.3%), followed by ¾ length (80.0%), short (76.7%), and long sleeves (56.7%). While this study focused on the aesthetic clothing preferences of older women, there was no exploration of why these preferences were chosen, except with respect to colour preference. The women indicated one's hair and complexion influenced the colour selected. The study's authors cited two possible additional influences on participants' colour choices: the fact that the participants all lived in Florida and that the study was conducted during the summer months. Indeed, residing in Florida may have influenced the participants' sleeve choices. Furthermore, their particular ages and subsequent life experiences may also have influenced their choices.

As a group, older women have been under represented in clothing research samples. For example, in a review of 20 studies on fashion adoption conducted between 1955 and 1988, 11 of the studies only used college students for subjects, and only two studies had an age range that included women over age 55 (Behling, 1992). The exclusion of older women from clothing studies suggests a cultural bias against older women as fashion consumers. Indeed, Behling suggests the profile of fashion adopters needs to be expanded so that it includes older fashion consumers.

Since older women, as a group, have been under represented in the research on fashion adoption, conclusions from such research regarding older women and fashion are questionable. For instance, Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955), included in Behling's (1992) review, concluded fashion leadership and general interest in fashion decline as women grow older. However, Katz and Lazarsfeld's study was conducted in 1955 and involved only female subjects aged 15 to 45. In this post-war period, women were expected to have large families and fulfill the role of wife and mother. It seems likely that women in their study showed less interest in fashion upon marrying and having children because they simply did not have the time or money to maintain a household, raise children and follow fashion trends. Indeed, interest in fashion is related to the number of children in one's family (Katz and Lazarfeld in Behling). Clearly, another explanation of the findings is women's lack of personal time, rather than a disinterest in fashion as they age. Furthermore, the study may have yielded different results if it had included women over age 45 for whom, on average, familial responsibilities begin to decrease, unless an aging parent requires significant attention.

There is evidence to suggest women's interest in fashion does not decline with age. In addition to Spruiell and Jernigan's (1982) clothing preference study cited earlier, in a survey of female catalogue shoppers, aged 55 and older, Shim & Bickle (1993) reported aging women's strong dissatisfaction with the apparel options available to them with respect to style, colour and fabric print. In a Swedish study of 750 women, aged 65 to 80, 46 percent reported problems finding clothing that fit (physically) and 51 percent reported difficulties finding clothing that was "modern in style" (Kaiser, 1997, p. 432). Some of the women surveyed expressed their feeling of being forced into an "old lady style of dressing" by the marketplace (Kaiser, p. 432). The evidence points to an older consumer for whom aesthetically pleasing clothing matters, although the exact age category or categories is uncertain, and what styles each category enjoys is not clear.

In addition to the under representation of older women, as a group, in clothing research, there is a homogeneous view of older women reflected in clothing research. Older women are mistakenly seen as a monolithic group, when in fact, women over age 65 have a wide range of activity levels and lifestyle needs based on different economic, health, education and housing status; work status and history; and family and relationship status (Paoletti, 1998). Indeed, there are more differences among older adults, as a group, than adults in middle age and younger groupings. In other words, a group of eighteen year old people are more alike than a group of sixty year old people (Menchin, 1989). Nevertheless, the results of studies designed to investigate "older women's" clothing experience have been applied to women over age 55, despite the fact their samples often represent women aged 55 to 70. For example, in their study of women's dissatisfaction with the fit of apparel purchased through mail order catalogues, Shim & Bickle (1993)

defined "the older market" as "55 years or older" (p. 53). Yet, the mean age of respondents in their study was 66 years of age, and since the range of ages included in their study was not provided, it is unclear to what age groups exactly their results on fit dissatisfaction apply. It is clear, however, the application of results to all women over 55 years of age is potentially misleading.

Although research samples of women "over 55" or "over 65" may be segmented into categories, such as 55 to 64 and 64 to 75, the last range is generally defined as "65 and over" or "75 and over." These "and over" groupings are rarely used in studies on the behaviour and attitudes of younger adult cohorts, suggesting ageism permits their use with older populations. While the categorizing may accurately represent the general population and reflect the smaller numbers of participants available over 75 years of age, the last category usually includes double the age range as the lower categories. As a result, the findings pertaining to this last age category are confusing and potentially inaccurate. For example, Patterson & Walden (1984) in a representative sample included an age category of "75 and over" and had a participant as old as 96 years of age. There are physical differences between a woman aged 75 and a woman aged 96 that may impact the clothing experience of each differently.

This review suggests that while older women, as a group, are interested in clothing aesthetics, the clothing aesthetic preferences of women 70 to 84 have not been adequately studied. Specifically to address this gap, the sample in our study is women aged 70 to 84. The length of this birth cohort was determined based on evidence that a woman's interest in clothing declines as her health status declines (Joyner, 1993), typically by her mid 80's. Self-reported health status includes reporting on one's

physical ability to perform various independent tasks and one's rate of social participation (Joyner). The impact of age on one's ability to perform physical tasks becomes of "primary concern to some old (age 75-84) and many of the oldest-old (age 85-99)" (Spirduso, 1995, p.27). Although patterns of physical limitation vary, the probability of experiencing additional limitation increases with age (Rudberg et al., 1996). For example, approximately 20% of people aged 65 and over living on their own report having some difficulty performing "activities of daily living" and this rate doubles for those over 85 years of age (Rudberg et al., 1996, p. 430). In addition, the rate is higher for women than men (Rudberg et al.). Accordingly, this research suggests that a woman's health status is likely to decrease after age 85, which reduces her interest in clothing. Therefore, the sample cohort was established as 70 to 84 years of age to ensure that participants could speak to the research question in this study.

Aesthetics

Up until the twentieth century, aesthetics referred to the study of "beauty," in absolute terms, which implied a standard way that all things, including clothing, should look (DeLong, 1998; O'Neal, 1998; Fiore et al., Part one, 1996). Beauty connoted qualities of excellence. However, definitions of excellence change due to changing cultural values. Therefore, with respect to dress, "the subject of aesthetic inquiry is how the body is clothed to be most attractive to the eye, and this is subject to time and interpretation and the values of different periods" (DeLong, p. 4).

Characteristics of clothing influence one's perception of and preference for particular styles of dress (Fiore et al., Part two, 1996). Characteristics of clothing, or aesthetic attributes, include formal qualities (ie. colour, line, and texture); expressive

qualities (feelings associated with the object); and referential qualities (references to the world beyond the object) (DeLong, 1998; Fiore et al., Part two, 1996). Through her aesthetic preferences, a woman expresses how she finds pleasure in the world around her and how she wants to communicate her identity to others (Fiore et al. Part one, 1996; Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). Aesthetic preference can also represent a shared expression of a group(s) to which an individual belongs (DeLong, 1998).

The purpose of this study is to identify and understand the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84, to learn what clothing styles they think look most attractive on them. This inquiry requires understanding their aesthetic response to clothing, which is experienced through the dynamic interaction of three "determinants": the form, the viewer, and the context of viewing (DeLong, 1998, p.11). The aesthetic attributes of clothing – formal, expressive and referential qualities – are discussed in the context of this dynamic interaction.

Form

Form is described as the interaction of fabric and the body, as "a distinctive arrangement of colours, textures, lines, and shapes" (DeLong, 1998, p.13). Clothing designers manipulate formal qualities to create meaningful or aesthetically pleasing form. Formal qualities are categorized as surface features (i.e. colour and pattern) and layout features (i.e. silhouette, garment dimensions, and proportion). Style is defined as the unique way in which the parts of a form are put together (DeLong). The "interactive nature" of the form's parts impacts aesthetic response (Fiore et al., Part two, 1996, p. 99). Indeed, viewing dress is considered a Gestalt experience (DeLong; O'Neal, 1998; Fiore et al., Part two; Roach- Higgins & Eicher, 1992).

The assumption of Gestalt is that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Combined in an outfit, separates, or parts, influence viewing differently than they each would separately. For example, a dark coloured jacket will have a different impact on an outfit depending on the other parts that make up the outfit. If this jacket is put with white pants and top, the jacket contrasts to the other parts of the whole outfit; unlike if the jacket is put with dark pants and top, in which it assimilates with the other parts (DeLong, 1998). The experience of the Gestalt is said to occur through the process of combining separates into an ensemble (DeLong).

Viewer

The viewer can be both the wearer and/or the observer(s). This study is concerned with the viewer as wearer, which includes not only how the clothing form looks but also feels physically. Looking at herself in the mirror, the viewer considers both the visual and physical aspects of dress. In addition, expressive and referential qualities are manifested during the viewing of the form. Expressive features arise from directly viewing the form. They represent or convey internal states of mind, feelings or emotions (Fiore et al., Part two, 1996). Before thought occurs, spontaneous feelings emerge from viewing the form. For instance, red-orange generally brings out excitement, as opposed to light blue, which usually leads to feelings of calm (DeLong, 1998). While expressive features arise directly from what is seen in the form, referential qualities are indirectly understood, not known from merely viewing the form. Referential aspects of dress reference the outside world through symbols, which are interpreted through the shared meanings of a specific culture (DeLong; Fiore et al., Part two, 1996; Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). For example, wearing rainbow colours in a striped pattern is

symbolic of happiness in the Korean culture, related to the cultural importance placed on living happy lives (DeLong).

Context of viewing

Referential features of dress illustrate how the cultural context impacts an individual's aesthetic response. The cultural context includes time, place, values, beliefs, ideology (DeLong, 1998), education, gender, and age (Fiore et al., Part three, 1996). A viewer's individual and cultural experiences shape her preferences, suggesting her preferences are learned (DeLong; O'Neal, 1998; Fiore et al., Part three; Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). "How we believe we should look and the image we would like to project are ideals which influence our viewing habits" (DeLong et al., 1997, p. 87). Gender, which represents the way one's sex is presented to others (Michelman, 1991), is expressed through referential aspects of dress. People use culturally determined symbols such as dress to put other individuals into one of primarily two gender categories (Michelman). For example, in contemporary western societies, women wear pants and skirts, but men only wear pants. "Gender has remained the basic distinction in dress, currently and historically…" (Michelman, p. 203). Indeed, Lerner (1986) uses dress as a metaphor to define the term gender: "It is a costume, a mask, a straight jacket in which men and women dance their unequal dance" (p. 238).

Fashion, which is culturally determined, is a source of many referential aspects of dress (DeLong, 1998). Fashion is defined as "a look, a style, identified as what is current with the times. It is what is recognized by people of a particular era to be an expression of their time" (DeLong, p. 18). Different cultures and sub-cultural groups may develop different ideas about how the body should be clothed and presented. In addition to the

cultural context, the immediate physical context, including the immediate space, lighting, surrounding textures and shapes impact the viewing of the clothing form (DeLong).

Age and aesthetic response

The impact of age on one's aesthetic preference for clothing styles has not been studied (Eckman, 1997; DeLong et al., 1997). The impact of age on music preference (another aesthetic product), however, has been studied. Researchers believe one's preference for music styles is influenced by age, with preference formation "peaking" at about age 23, leading researchers to suggest a cohort effect (Eckman). "Exploration of critical periods in the development of aesthetic preferences for fashion could enhance understanding of preference formation and use of demographic variables to predict key aspects of product evaluation" (Eckman, p. 195).

A review of aesthetics literature shows how the aesthetic response occurs through three aspects that interrelate and influence each other: the form, the viewer and the context of viewing. For the viewer as wearer, the aesthetic response is a combination of sensations, symbolism, expression, ideas, moods and feelings (Fiore et al., Part three,1996). The viewer's individual personality characteristics, her past experiences and those shared through cultural knowledge influence her viewing of form. The review of aesthetic literature points to the need to explore the social context and clothing worn during the late 1920's and up until after World War II. This review will provide an understanding of the general cultural norms and dominant clothing styles that this study's sample would have been exposed to in their formative years. But first, in order to better understand the aesthetic clothing form of women aged 70 to 84, the physiological

changes aging women experience are described and their impact on the aesthetic clothing form is examined.

Fit

Given clothing, as an aesthetic form, involves the interaction of fabric and the body, it is important to understand the physiological changes women experience as they age, and how these changes impact their aesthetic response to the clothing available to them. Goldsberry et al., (Part I, 1996) conducted a national anthropometric survey to establish the first large-scale body measurement database specifically of women age 55 and older. Across the United States, older woman's body measurements were collected in the seven standard body types (Junior Petite; Junior; Misses Petite; Misses; Misses Tall; Size 34 to 52; Half size ranging from 12 ½ to 26 ½). The study's findings detail how the aging female body generally changes over time: "the forward tilt of the head and neck; increased width across the back blade area; fuller upper arm; longer neck-to-bust measure; increase in waist thickness, abdominal seated measure, and abdominal extension; and the flattening of the derriere curvature" (Goldsberry et al., 1996). These anatomical changes occur from gradual bone loss caused in part by osteoporosis; calcification resulting from the degeneration of cartilage tissue; and gradual reduction of muscular tissue associated with changes in the connective and circulatory tissues (Goldsberry et al., Part I).

The current apparel sizing systems are based on anthropometric data gathered in 1941 that did not accurately represent all women with respect to ethnicity and age (Goldsberry et al. Part I, 1996). Therefore, it is not surprising that aging women experience frustration in finding ready-to-wear clothing that fits (Goldsberry et al., 1996;

Shim & Bickle, 1993; Smathers & Horridge, 1979), especially in the areas of the shoulders, back, waist, bust, arms and abdomen. Goldsberry et al. (1996) insist "apparel designers should be aware that apparel made for the younger, erect body frame will hang and fit differently than when worn on the more relaxed body frame associated with the aging figure" (p. 118).

To date, research to address women's frustrations with ready-to-wear clothing has narrowly defined fit in terms of its construction or technical aspects. Research on fit has not included other aesthetic considerations of what makes a good fit (Gazzuolo, 1985). For example, "While style [is] a significant factor, well-fitted clothing is a more important clothing attribute, representing a need which must be met before higher order needs can be met"(Goldsberry et al. Part II,1996, p. 121). However, the notion of "well-fitting" clothing - the so-called proper placement of seams and use of fitting devices such as darts to achieve a desired design – inherently involves aesthetic considerations. Consequently, technical fit and aesthetic fit are not mutually exclusive clothing attributes in a superior and subordinate relationship to one another. Rather, both are necessary to the concept of fit and are interrelated in the design of clothing (Lamb and Kallal, 1992). Therefore, older women's frustration with the fit of ready-to-wear clothing can be addressed more fully by identifying their aesthetic clothing preferences.

Social and Costume History

The period during the Great Depression and up until after World War II appear paradoxical for women. While their role as wife and mother was affirmed, at the same time they were also exposed to new educational and vocational opportunities. The Great Depression, beginning in October of 1929 and lasting until 1939, had a devastating effect

on millions of Canadians. Families and individuals made every effort possible to avoid "going on the dole" (Prentice et al., 1994). The social stigma of receiving relief was demoralizing. Husbands would leave their families in search of employment, and if they could not find a job, often they would abandon their families because the humiliation of requiring assistance was too much to bear. In Edmonton in 1921, the number of female headed households was 978 as compared to 2653 in 1931 (Prentice et al.). Initially, relief was not given to single women, underscoring the pressure on them to marry. For instance, relief officers are reported to have told some young women they did not require assistance "with figures like theirs" (Prentice et al., p. 266). Their comments highlight the value and currency placed on a woman's appearance.

During the depression, although heavily resented, women entered the workforce in large numbers in order to provide for their families and themselves. Unlike men, they were able to find work in traditionally female areas of work. At the same time, they were expected to work harder at home to "make ends meet." While there was a growing acceptance of single women working, these women were still expected to work for only a few years before marrying and to seek "feminine" jobs that would not pose a threat to male workers. Marriage and motherhood were encouraged as the most important and rewarding careers for women. Husbands were considered the head of the household, and women were to support and submit to them. Women were expected to stay in their 'proper sphere' – to continue their nurturing role, keep their family together and instill their children with moral virtues (Prentice et al., 1994; Cook & Mitchinson, 1976). The same is true of women's experience during World War II, which began in 1939 and ended in 1945. Women were expected to work outside the home in machine shops, on

farmland and at the front lines to support the war effort. However, following the end of the war, women were expected and encouraged to leave their jobs and return to their domestic duties as wife and mother and daughter.

The role of marriage and motherhood advanced during the 1930's and 1940's illustrates how women's identities were defined in terms of their relationships to men. Given their usually low paying, dead-end jobs, women could increase their social and economic status through marriage. However, this new status reflected their husbands' positions not their own. Women at this time were dependent on and defined in terms of their husbands. Yet, in times of crisis caused by depression and war, women were depended upon to financially support their families. In some instances they had to do this alone, if their husbands, brothers or fathers left to find work, went to war or abandoned the family. Despite women's demonstrated abilities to work outside their homes and fulfil the needs of their families and nation, it appears the message that women's careers should involve only marriage and raising children had a lasting impact. By 1958, the proportion of women going to college as compared to men was 35%, a drop from 47% in 1920 (Friedan, 1975).

The experience of depression and war and the cultural expectations of marriage and motherhood impacted women's everyday clothing experience and the fashions of the time. During the Great Depression, financial assistance from the government took the form of food and rent vouchers. There was no provision for clothing. As a result, women made clothes from such things as flour sacks. They darned, mended and patched clothing until it ultimately fell apart. The goal was to make clothing last by 'recycling' (mending and darning) the contemporary styles. The importance placed on appearing

appropriately dressed in public was illustrated when, "Sometimes women and children became virtual prisoners in their homes because they lacked suitable clothing to go out" (Prentice et al., 1994, p. 268).

With respect to the dominant silhouette during the 1930's, fashion trends emphasized the "natural form" of a woman's body, as the breasts, waistline and hips were defined in women's clothing styles (Tortora & Eubank, 1994). While this image of femininity represented traditional expectations of women remaining in the home, pants represented a revolutionary shift occurring away from their domestic role. Up until this time, trousers had been strictly defined as men's garments (earlier bifurcated women's garments were adaptations of bloomers which are cut differently than trousers) (Tortora & Eubank). Now, though, women were becoming active in certain sports and attending various sporting events. They required specific clothing to participate in and attend these activities. Therefore, sports clothing became more important and slacks became acceptable for women to wear in this sporting context. By the 1930s the clothing industry named this casual category of dress "sportswear" (Tortora & Eubank).

"The Depression certainly helped to bring the clothes of the different classes closer together, at least in general line…" (Laver, 1996, p. 245). In 1932, Parisian women were reported to have worn their fashions from the previous year to soirees and balls. They were described as "dressing more simply than last year, since they feel ostentatious costume is in bad taste these days" (*New York Times* article in Tortora & Eubank, 1994). Indeed, Laver suggests that "perhaps as a gesture of economy" evening dresses were sometimes made out of woolen or cotton materials that were previously considered only appropriate for day wear

(p. 245). In any event, by wearing styles that followed classic lines, women of any class could be assured of not appearing out of date (Tortora & Eubank, 1994).

Similar to the Depression, World War II impacted clothing aesthetics with values of frugality and simplicity. Overall, the silhouette was simple without excess, influenced by the lines of the military uniform. A typical wartime outfit included a knee-length skirt, tailored jacket with fitted waist and padded shoulders, giving civilian women a sort of military appearance (Laver, 1996). There were restrictions on the quantity of cloth and type of fabric that could be used in the construction of clothing (Laver; Tortora & Eubank). However, to supplement the rather severe lines of this typical outfit, dress fabrics were brightly coloured with some repeated patterns, although minimal to reduce waste during cutting. In addition to the scarcity of nylon, wool and silk, trouser cuffs and extra pockets were eliminated and the width of skirt hems was regulated. As during the depression, women were encouraged to recycle their clothing by "making-do and mending" (Laver, p. 254).

Fashion houses and notable couturiers of the late 1920's, 30's and 40's influenced fashion trends and eventually the every day clothing silhouette. Prior to the depression in the 1920's, Chanel introduced the now famous Chanel suit, which established simple and classic lines and the importance of the suit in women's wardrobes. In the 1930s, Vionnet was instrumental in developing the bias cut, creating styles of simplicity and elegance, with an emphasis on exceptional technical skills. Lelong was noted for elegant, feminine clothing of lasting wearability. In the late 1930's and into the 1940s, Schiaparelli was noted for originality with a flair for the unusual and unique, expressive of Surrealist influences (Tortora & Eubank, 1994). Following World War II in 1947, Christian Dior's

New Look symbolized the dominant style. This silhouette emphasized the breasts and hips, and as before the war, reemphasized women's role as wife and mother. Indeed, this was the start of the so-called baby boom. Given the influence of the Great Depression and World War II, the aesthetic in everyday clothing and fashion during the early years of the women in this study appears to be simple, classic, feminine, elegant and long lasting.

In addition to depression and war, a commercial event during this time period, the establishment of the cosmetics industry, influenced the aesthetic development of women in this study. The flourishing cosmetics industry became part of the field of experts advising women on the importance of their physical attractiveness in maintaining a healthy and successful marriage (Prentice et al., 1994). The beauty industry was expanding during the 1920's, as wearing makeup became acceptable during this decade and beauty parlors proliferated. The magnitude of the growth is illustrated by tax statistics of the time showing only two individuals paying income tax in this field in 1917 compared with 18,000 individuals and companies in 1927 (Tortora & Eubank, 1994). Cosmetic advertisements created the link between beauty and retaining a youthful appearance and refined femininity (Prentice et al.). Hence, youth and femininity became synonymous with attractiveness. As a result, the 1920's and 1930's were the beginning of aging women being "out of style" (Prentice et al., p. 291). Briefly reviewing the social and costume history of the late 1920's up until after World War II, underscores the need to understand the impact of appearance on identity formation.

Symbolic interaction theorists underscore the importance of appearance in creating meaningful social exchanges, which in turn create positive social feedback that enhances self-esteem (Joyner, 1993; Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992; Fritz-Cook, 1990).

According to a symbolic interaction perspective, an individual acquires or forms identities through social interaction (Joyner; Roach-Higgins & Eicher; Fritz-Cook). "The self is established, maintained and altered in and through communication" (Joyner, p. 18). Symbols and their shared meanings facilitate this communication. As a symbol, dress communicates identities, as it describes the social position of individuals in a social interaction (Roach-Higgins & Eicher). In her study of women aged 40 to 60, Ollinger (1974) found that women occasionally used clothing symbolically to associate themselves with people or social circumstances that they deemed important (in Fritz-Cook, 1990). However, clothing styles do not simply reflect social position. Rather, clothing styles are an integral component in the process of an individual's forming of attitudes toward and images of others (Rouse, 1989). Hollander (1993) explains how clothing can communicate intimate aspects of the wearer's character:

> Clothing . . . like tone of voice and speed of utterance, conveys other kinds of moral quality - the texture and style and flavor of the self . . . In a sense, the beautiful clothes *are* beautiful manners . . . Clothes make the man, not because they make up or invent what the man is or dress him up for show but because they actually create his conscious self. You are what you wear - and especially when class structure lacks rigidity . . . When you are dressed in any particular way at all, you are "revealed" rather than hidden (p. 444).

Symbolic interaction theorists argue an individual interprets a situation prior to any verbal communication; she does not instinctively respond to it. In other words, dress has a "certain priority over verbal discourse in communicating identity since it ordinarily sets the stage for subsequent verbal communication" (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992, p.

7). From her interpretation of the other and the situation, an individual determines her own behaviour and predicts the behaviour of other(s) (Joyner, 1993). A reciprocal relationship of interpretation develops between individuals in a social situation. In this way, symbolic interaction theorists describe appearance as a social process (Kaiser, 1997). Symbols of appearance convey information about the self to others. If both individuals attach the same meaning to symbols, then symbolic interaction or meaningful communication takes place (Kaiser). Consequently, symbolic interaction theorists conceptualize the self as a process, arguing that social experiences are dynamic enough to cause individuals to continually evaluate and redefine their perceptions of self (Kaiser, 1997). Clearly, appearance, and therefore clothing, is integral in the development of identity.

Empirical evidence suggests older women are concerned about their appearance as much as, if not more than when they were younger (Joyner, 1993). Roudabush (1978) found that women aged 55 to 65 used clothing to improve their appearance (in Joyner). Indeed, older women may maintain an interest in clothing because it can be used to enhance their appearance in an image conscious society that equates beauty with youth (Joyner; Fritz-Cook, 1990). In other words, older women may use clothing to "balance out the effects of aging" (Joyner, p. 27). Research also shows that older women are more likely to participate in social activities when they feel appropriately dressed (Joyner; Fritz-Cook). Social participation is important to older women, especially at a time when many experience a decrease in social opportunities due to their place in the life cycle (Joyner; Fritz-Cook; Smathers & Horridge, 1979). Hence, using clothing to improve their appearance and maintain their attractiveness can increase their desire and

opportunities to participate in social activities. Since the style of dress impacts one's social interactions, and it is important in the development of self, which is a dynamic process, symbolic interaction theory can provide a theoretical framework for understanding the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84.

Symbolic interaction theory, however, does not implicitly consider relationships of power or take into account the impact of gender on appearance and identify formation (Michelman, 1991). Yet, gender is a primary element in the study of appearance. Feminist theorists argue gender represents the social construction and distortion of differences between men and women, which are in turn used to legitimize and perpetuate the power relations between men and women – power relations that deem women less valuable and subordinate to men (Elliot & Mandell, 1998; Osmond & Thorne, 1993). "Gender is the cultural definition of behavior defined as appropriate to the sexes in a given society at a given time" (Lerner, 1986, p. 239). Having said this, feminists do not view women as victims, but rather, as active agents in the construction of their lives, culture and history.

Historically, a woman's sense of self and power has been tied to her physical appearance (Abu-Laban & McDaniel, 1998; Kaiser, 1997; Joyner, 1993; Greer, 1991; deBeauvoir, 1952). As a little girl, a woman learns the importance of her appearance. "For the female child, to be assessed as 'pretty' or 'beautiful' is the highest accolade, one that usually makes her parents proud...[a] daughter learns the lesson well. To be pretty is to be approved, liked, and rewarded" (Abu-Laban & McDaniel, p. 87). However, the beauty ideal girls grow up with is dependent on age, and since beauty, a woman's source of power, is equated with youth, her power is limited by time (Abu-Laban & McDaniel).

As women age they become aware of the shift in attention away from their physical selves - the source of their value in a patriarchy (Greer, 1991). Patriarchy is a term used to describe a society in which male dominance over women and children is institutionalized (Lerner, 1986) and a set of values, beliefs and behaviours promotes the welfare and privilege of men (Michelman, 1991). Older women discover their value and identities have been constructed in relation to men. Men's subordination of women, through gender relations, occurs since men define themselves as the One (the normal) and women as the Other (the deviant) (deBeauvoir, 1952). Spender (1985) summarizes, "women have not counted except so far as they relate to men. Their silence has been successfully engineered" (p. 63). Indeed, as Reverand Robert Sedgewick declared to his audience at the Young Men's Christian Association in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1856:

> "The errors and blunders which are interwoven with the subject of women's rights and women's place in modern society are…to be traced either to the ignoring of the fact or the omission of the fact that in the economy of nature or rather in the design of God, *woman is the complement of man*. In defining her sphere and describing her influence, this fact is fundamental" (in Cook & Mitchinson, 1976).

As an aging woman realizes she is no longer sexually attractive to males, she first feels betrayal, then relief, and eventually freedom (deBeauvoir, 1952; Greer, 1991; Steinem, 1992). The social dismissal of older women due to their supposed lack of sexuality – one of their primary functions in a patriarchy - frees them. Within the invisibility is freedom. Being left alone results in independence. Seeing herself as someone no longer consumed by the demand to please or "take care of," she feels free to think of new possibilities to undertake and achieve (Greer; deBeauvoir). Although

women learn they have acquired valuable experience and knowledge with age, they soon realize they have nowhere to exercise and express this new found independence, unless they already have substantial economic power, which is the exception, not the rule for aging women in most societies. Hence, aging women become socially invisible in western societies.

Although it has become acceptable for older women to participate longer in public activities, symbolized by their appearance in television and movies, it has not led to an acceptance or respect for the physical appearance of old age (Kaiser, 1997). On the contrary, women are encouraged to be secretive about their age and to do all they can to look young, including undergoing plastic surgery, because young equals beautiful. With the affirmation that a woman's power is contained in her appearance, competition can occur (Abu-Laban & McDaniels, 1998). For example, women who defy their age and its physical characteristics "too much" may be chastised as "mutton dressed as lamb" (Abu-Laban & McDaniels, p. 96).

Feminist theorists argue that underneath the importance placed on women's physical appearance lies men's fear of losing their dominant position within society. Unrealistic beauty standards are a means of limiting women's behaviour. In other words, beauty standards dictate to women what they can and cannot do (Abu-Laban & McDaniels, 1998; Steinem, 1992). Steinem argues, "with age comes authority, and beauty standards are often a way of getting rid of women just as they are attaining real power" (p. 220). Indeed, there are numerous examples of female television newscasters who have been fired because they were "too old"; yet, their male colleagues remain on the air long afterward (Abu-Laban & McDaniel; Steinem). The ultimate message is

clear, as demonstrated earlier, as long as aging women hide the signs of aging, they can be "visible."

This literature review has shown how cultural stereotypes of older women as unfashionable have limited the study of older women's experience of clothing. Such research has not adequately distinguished between age categories of older women, and it has focused on the technical fit of older women's clothing. Other aesthetic considerations have not been explored, since they are viewed as secondary to technical fit.

Despite the limited scope and homogeneous bias of this research, there is evidence to suggest older women are interested in clothing aesthetics. In order to identify and understand the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84, clothing aesthetic response literature was reviewed. Aesthetic response is a complex experience, a combination of emotion, symbolism and cognition. Aesthetic attributes are categorized as formal, expressive and referential. These attributes interact through three dynamic "determinants" - the form, viewing and the context of viewing - to produce the aesthetic response (DeLong, 1998). Symbolic interaction and feminist theories provide a framework for understanding the interaction between the formal, expressive and referential attributes.

The impact of age on aesthetic response or preferences has not been adequately studied. Yet, the expected increase in the population of women over age 65 has spurred the call to study such population groups. This population of women has not traditionally been a priority market for the clothing industry. In the future, however, the cohorts that make up the population over age 65 will increasingly contain women who have worked

outside the home and participated in the present consumption-oriented society. Combined with a changing view of older women, cohorts such as women aged 70 to 84, may become potentially viable market segments for clothing designers, manufacturers and retailers. This industry emphasis would allow women at any age the opportunity to continue to experience the aesthetic through clothing.

Chapter III. Methods

The aesthetics of older women need to be examined (DeLong et al., 1997). Yet, as the literature review made clear, the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84 have not been studied, little is known about their aesthetic clothing preferences or responses. As the review of aesthetics literature also showed, the aesthetic response is a dynamic process influenced by personal and cultural factors, thereby making it a complex concept to study. In addition, the literature review underscored the social invisibility that women aged 70 to 84 can experience often symbolized in the "dowdy" ready-to-wear clothing available to older women. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to identify and understand the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84. This chapter presents the methodological framework and the methods that were used to address the purpose of this exploratory study.

Methodological framework

DeVault (1996) describes a feminist methodology as committed to three goals. First, feminists are concerned with the "excavation" of women's lives which involves "shifting the focus of standard practice from men's concerns in order to reveal the locations and perspectives of (all) women" (p. 32). This aspect of feminist methodology refers to "bringing women in," and creating opportunities for them to find their "voices" and "make themselves visible." (DeVault; Nielsen, 1990). Second, feminists seek a method of science that minimizes harm and control of research participants. Research is conducted within the context of an egalitarian relationship of researcher and participants. Third, feminists desire a methodology that produces results that enhance women's lives through social change or action.

Qualitative methods are often labeled as feminist methods. However, qualitative research methods are no more feminist in nature than quantitative research methods. DeVault (1996) argues, "What makes a qualitative or a quantitative approach feminist is a commitment to finding women and their concerns. The point is not only to know about women, but to provide a fuller and more accurate account of society by including them" (p. 31). Feminists have studied what was not studied in the past, including rape, wife abuse, sexual harassment, and prostitution (Nielsen, 1990). In so doing, feminist research has made visible what was once invisible. However generally speaking, feminist theorists have overlooked the experience of aging in the subordination of women (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). One objective of this research is to explore the impact of age on the relationship between gender and appearance, which can contribute to learning more fully about older women's experiences.

Similar to a feminist methodology, human ecology researchers endeavour to enhance individual well-being. Human ecologists view the individual as a social being and therefore they are concerned about the relationship of the individual to the environments around her (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993). Within a human ecological framework, clothing can be characterized as the human body's second skin and an intimate part of one's near environment (Touliatos & Compton, 1988). Clothing as an aesthetic form involves the interaction of the body (human) and fabric (the near environment). Clothing impacts the wearer's interactions with other's in her social environment. Like feminists, human ecologists assume women can exert control over their lives and the environment around them – they are active agents in constructing their own realities (Bubolz & Sontag). Furthermore, these researchers believe women should

take action to improve their lives and well-being. Therefore, by studying the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84, this study explores women's interaction with their near environment of clothing. This interaction does not occur in a vacuum. Rather, as the literature review revealed, women's surrounding environment (cultural context) influences her viewing of form and in turn, her clothing preferences may influence her interactions in social and other environments.

Consistent with feminist human ecological research goals, focus group methodology was chosen to study the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84. The focus group is an appropriate method when the goal of a study is exploratory, when little is known about a topic (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998). In addition, the focus group is an appropriate method for studying groups of individuals who are marginalized because it can "give a voice" to them (Morgan, 1996, p. 133). Focus groups involve an informal discussion among a small group of participants, usually 8 to 12 people, about a topic that is of interest to them (Stewart & Shamdasani). The topic is discussed under the direction of a moderator/researcher, who encourages participation and discussion. The researcher's interacting directly with respondents allows for clarification and questioning of responses in order to elicit more information. Moreover, instead of theorizing if and why respondent's views differ, researchers can directly observe participants clarifying each other's comments and addressing areas of diversity (Morgan, 1996). In this way, feminist researchers argue the involvement of the researcher compliments the research; it does not contaminate it (DeVault, 1996).

Data is generated and gathered through the group interaction of participants (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998; Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995). The group interaction

that takes place in focus groups - what Morgan (1996) refers to as "the group effect" - offers the opportunity to examine complex behaviours and motivations (p. 139). Indeed, a strength of the focus group method is the open-ended response format which generates data in the respondents' own words and context (Stewart & Shamdasani; Abraham-Murali & Littrell), unlike survey research data, which is potentially artificial given the use of pre-determined response categories (Stewart & Shamdasani). Group interaction is intended to produce a broad range and depth of information on a topic through "hitch-hiking" or "brainstorming," which is "the constructive elaborations of other group members' ideas" (Abraham-Murali & Littrell). Another advantage to focus group research is the integration of data collection and data analysis, which allows the researcher(s) to evaluate the project at any stage of data collection and to make changes, if necessary, to further stages of data collection (Hamilton, 1989). This enables the researcher(s) to stay consistent with the purpose of the study. Indeed, the successful use of focus groups requires a well-framed research purpose prior to beginning focus group research and maintaining their use is consistent with this purpose throughout the study (Stewart & Shamdasani). Finally, focus groups are flexible, since they can be conducted in a variety of locations and settings to accommodate participant needs (Stewart & Shamdasani).

The structure of the focus group method is conducive to identifying and understanding the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84. Due to cultural norms they were exposed to during their formative years, women 70 to 84 years of age may not be accustomed to being asked for their opinions, particularly in a written format. However, they are familiar with discussing their thoughts and opinions within small

groups of other women. Gathering data through group interaction, in the participants' own words, best suits this study of women's aesthetic response, since it is a subjective and multi-dimensional experience. In addition to the familiar discussion format of focus groups, their flexibility encourages participation since they can be conducted in a familiar and convenient location for the women in this study, who may not wish to travel to unknown destinations far from their homes. Finally, quantitative survey methodology has been the dominant research method in clothing research (Lennon, 1995). Employing qualitative methods, such as focus groups, will enhance the knowledge generated in the field as a whole. Hence, the focus group method is suitable for beginning the study of older women's clothing aesthetics and "making visible" one aspect of women's experience of aging.

Sample

The study included three focus groups, which were homogeneous in composition. The small number of groups and relatively homogeneous sample is consistent with the exploratory nature of this study. While studies usually include four to six groups, the more homogeneous the sample the fewer focus groups required to achieve "saturation" or the point at which little new information is generated (Morgan, 1996, p. 144). In this study after completing three focus groups, saturation was reached. Information from group three was very similar to that gathered in groups one and two. Initial analysis of the group transcripts resulted in a "rich" set of data; it was thorough and offered a "full and revealing picture" of the sample's clothing aesthetics (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998, p. 94).

Defining the sample in terms of year of birth and gender produced a fairly homogenous cohort. All the women in the sample were exposed to the cultural norms of the late 1920's, 1930's and 1940's, when they were in their teenage and early adult years, a time when their sense of identity was being formed (Whitbourne & Powers, 1994). For example, individuals who experienced the Great Depression and World War II collectively share some attitude and behaviours different than other cohorts (Reynolds et al., 1998; Spirduso, 1995). With respect to aesthetics, those who have shared similar experiences with respect to age may have similar aesthetic responses (DeLong, 1998). All the women had similar health status at the time of the focus groups reflected in their physical ability to each live alone in their own private residences, and all were retired from working outside the home.

Each focus group included eight women aged 70 to 86. The mean age of the sample was 78. In order to ensure groups of eight women, two women participated whose ages exceeded the category limits of the study – age 70 to 84. In the first focus group, a woman 86 years of age participated, and in the second group, a woman 85 years of age participated. Each of these women was very interested in participating in the study and met the criteria for participation (detailed in the discussion of procedures). The first two groups were conducted in Edmonton and the third group was conducted in Regina. The table below provides a synopsis of the sample's demographic characteristics gathered from a brief demographic and background survey (Appendix A). Table 1 provides an expanded overview of the demographic and background information (See p. 66).

Synopsis of demographic and background information:

1. Age	Mean age of 78 and range in age from 71 to 86
2. Highest level of education	100% had at least 9th grade; 86% completed post-secondary or university training
3. Employed outside the home	96% had worked outside the home
4. Purchase clothing for travel	61% purchased clothing for travel purposes
5. Clothes to wear to activities	91% had clothes they needed for attending activities
6. Health status	91% were in average or above average health (above average: 39% in good health and 35% in excellent health)
7. Estimate of money spent last year on clothing	60% spent between $500 and $2000; 22% spent less than $500; 8% spent between $200 and $3000*
8. Importance of wearing stylish clothing	63% reported often or always; 27% reported sometimes; 10% reported rarely to never

*It is important to note that the moderators observed some hesitation and discomfort among participants while tasked with filling out the survey. In particular, participants expressed difficulty answering question number 7. However, all but one participant answered this particular question.

Procedures

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for each focus group (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998). Participants were recruited through a process of referral (O'Neal, 1998), whereby someone who was informed about the study referred potential participants to the author. In Edmonton a hair salon and a church congregation were informed about the study. The salon displayed a poster with contact information (Appendix B), and in the church, one of the author's professors announced the study at a Sunday service and provided the author's contact information. In Regina, the author's mother provided names of potential participants to the author and these women in turn

referred additional potential informants. Potential participants were contacted by phone, informed of the referral source, given a brief summary of the study and invited to participate in it, if they were born between 1915 and 1929.

Potential participants were chosen based on their age, 70 to 84 years of age (with two exceptions noted in discussion of the sample), their willingness to participate in the study and their ability to speak to the research question. The ability to speak to the research question was loosely determined by two factors, the women's positive health status and sufficient economic means. First, the women's positive health status was indicated by their living independently and was confirmed by contacting the women by telephone at their private residences. Second, the women's sufficient economic means was addressed through recruiting of potential participants. In Edmonton, the hair salon and church were located in middle to upper-middle class areas of the city. Similarly, in Regina, the originally referred participants were known to reside in middle to upper-middle class areas of the city. The assumption was not that only women of economic means cared about their appearance; rather they were informants who could perhaps more easily speak to the research question.

In Edmonton the first focus group occurred in the common room of an apartment complex where six of the eight women in the group lived. The second Edmonton group took place in the lounge of the Department of Human Ecology at the University of Alberta. In Regina the focus group was conducted at the author's parents' home. All three locations were private and informal with good acoustics. All three locations were in close proximity to participants' homes. Transportation to the focus groups was

provided in both Edmonton and Regina. Participants were seated in a circle around a table and refreshments were served throughout each discussion.

Two moderators, the author and her thesis supervisor, conducted the first two groups in Edmonton. The author was the sole moderator in the third group conducted in Regina. The author attended a one-day workshop on focus group methodology prior to the start of the three groups. At the conclusion of each of the first and second focus groups, the moderators reflected on the discussions to determine if any changes were necessary for the remaining focus group(s). After the first group the moderators agreed that while all aspects of the discussion had been interesting, there was a need to keep the participants focused on answering the guiding questions. In addition, both moderators agreed that dominant participants needed to be encouraged to listen to the comments of less vocal participants, and these participants in turn needed to be encouraged to contribute more. There were no changes made to the following four guiding questions: 1) what style features do you like in your clothing? 2) How is it finding these styles? 3) How do you know when you have found these styles? 4) If you could talk to a designer who would design a daytime outfit for you, what would you tell her? Throughout the discussion the moderator(s) probed, clarified and summarized participants' answers. Questions were continuously reformulated to elicit the participants' thoughts and feelings regarding their clothing. This gave them another opportunity to clarify their thoughts.

Each focus group lasted approximately one and half to two hours and was audio taped. At the start of each focus group, participants completed a consent form and a short demographic and background survey (Appendix A). Questions in the survey were designed to provide a fuller picture of participants, which supplemented and/or helped to

explain information gathered during focus groups. The study's purpose and how results would be used were reviewed. Participants were reminded that the discussions would be audio taped and reassured their participation would be confidential. The author began each discussion by thanking the women for coming and stating her desire to learn about what clothing styles they like to wear. She restated the purpose of the study - to identify and understand the clothing aesthetics of women in their age group. She highlighted an objective of the research was to inform researchers and manufacturers about their preferences. The author shared her understanding of the research literature, which suggests despite an aging population, older women in general have difficulty finding stylish, well-fitting clothing. The participants were then invited to describe the styles they like to wear. The term "style" was defined as "design features" with examples provided such as neckline, hemline, sleeve length, silhouette, pattern, and colour.

The Human Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics approved the procedures for this study.

Data analysis

One of the distinguishing characteristics of focus group research is its collection of data through group interaction; in fact the transcript of the group interaction is the data (Morgan, 1996). The audio recordings of the three focus groups were transcribed verbatim. The author transcribed the audio tapes of groups one and two. Royal Reporting Services, a court reporting service, transcribed the audio tape of group three and guaranteed confidential transcription services. To understand the richness of the data, analysis combined "strategies" of "categorizing" and "contextualizing" (Maxwell, 1998, p. 89). Themes and aesthetic attributes were not identified prior to the focus

groups but emerged out of the careful reading and rereading of the group transcripts (Abraham-Murali &Littrell, 1995).

Initial analysis involved categorizing, which meant reading the transcripts many times and analyzing them for emerging themes or general ideas (Maxwell, 1998). These themes were compared to notes the author had kept while transcribing audio tapes of groups one and two. Twelve general themes emerged, for example, "certain style features were desired to conceal parts of the body that have changed due to aging, such as the hump appearing on the back at the bottom of the neck." The author then organized phrases and words from the transcripts under four categories that represented the twelve themes: 1) physical appearance; 2) physical performance; 3) expressiveness; 4) extrinsic value (Abraham-Murali & Littrell, 1995). However, in this linear approach, the richness of the themes was lost. Analysis of these categories showed that the data were not unique to women aged 70 to 84. For example, preferring "good fabric" such as light wool or preferring "plain, simple lines" is not unique to this sample of women. In other words, the "lists" of attributes alone did not reflect the richness of the data. What was unique to this group were the meanings behind and associated with particular attributes – why they were important to the women in the sample.

Aesthetic attributes influence aesthetic response through the dynamic combination of the form, viewing of the form and the context of viewing. A categorizing approach provided a list of aesthetic attributes. However, this approach could not provide the interpretation necessary to understand the interaction of formal, expressive and referential aspects of dress. Therefore, "contextualizing" of the data was needed (Maxwell, 1998). The transcripts were reread along with a rereading of the literature review in order to

interpret and find the meaning surrounding the aesthetic attributes (O'Neal, 1998). It became clear the research purpose in this inductive, exploratory study–to identify and understand the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84–could not be addressed solely by either a categorizing or contextualizing analysis. Both types of analyses were necessary in this type of qualitative study (Maxwell). Categorizing was necessary to identify the aesthetic attributes, and contextualizing was necessary to understand the said attributes.

Chapter IV. Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify and understand the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84. Table 1 at the end of this chapter shows results of the brief demographic and background survey that participants completed prior to beginning the focus group discussions. Analysis of the focus group transcripts revealed themes that describe and explain the aesthetic response of the women in this study. Formal, expressive and referential attributes were expressed in terms of four contexts: identity, cohort, age and lifestyle. These contexts account for the women's preferences and explain how they are unique to this sample of women.

Identity - "When I wear something that I feel good in, it means I can forget about myself"

There is clear evidence that aesthetics matters to this sample of women aged 70 to 84. How they express themselves through clothing matters - their appearance is important to them. They wanted to present an image consistent with their sense of self-confidence and self-assurance.

> When you look good, it makes you feel good. And you can tell, or at least I can tell, when I - I'm sure everyone can - when I put something on, and I…don't really like it, I go and find another one that will suit me. (3, Jean)
>
> I believe that when I wear something that I feel good in, it means I can forget about myself. I don't have to be worrying about whether I look okay or not. I'm comfortable and I can completely forget about myself, and that's what I aim at, when I say I feel comfortable in something (3, Muriel).

> So then, when you're out or interacting you're just interacting, you're not self-conscious or aware or worried? (3, Moderator-Susan)

Due to inaccurate sizing and/or undesirable aesthetic features in available ready-to-wear clothing, the women often find it difficult to express themselves through clothing.

> When you go to choose especially a dress or a suit, there might be ten racks of suits but there's only about a tenth of them that would interest us because the skirts are too short. (3, Jean)
>
> I absolutely can't understand why there aren't dresses out there – almost everything is two pieces. I like dresses; I really do. And, uh, I can't find them. Uh, I rarely find them I should say, and if I do, I'm not satisfied with them…I like classic styles. The styles you find out there now seem to sort of hang from the outside shoulders to the ankles and it …that's it. I like something that fits and is classic that you can use for a long time. (1, Mae)

When they cannot create a look they desire, they are unsatisfied with their appearance and become self-conscious.

> You're thinking that I'm really not…this isn't me at all. It doesn't fit properly. I don't like things that don't fit properly (1, Margaret).

When they can find the style that suits them – expresses their identity– they are relieved and delighted.

> Just a couple of weeks ago I found, I had been looking for a black dress, short sleeves, that I could wear coloured jackets over and things like this.

> And I couldn't find them any place. Finally I did come across this one. Just a little round neck and just a princess line. Put it on and I knew that was what I wanted. You know, you feel good in it! [laughter] (1, Addie).

For this sample of women, looking good meant feeling good, which meant feeling appropriate in their clothing.

> When you look good, it makes you feel good. (3, Merle)
>
> If I wear something that is me, I'm quite relaxed. I don't know if you all feel like that, but I do. (3, Muriel)
>
> That's right, you have to feel right in it - (3, Elsie)

The women used the word "elegant" throughout the focus groups to describe how they wanted to look and feel, which are synonymous conditions to these women.

> I like to feel, I guess, I'm thinking way back…I like to feel kind of elegant sometimes. (1, Mae)
>
> I was going to say elegant comes to me, you know, yeah, that's what we want to look- (1, Pat)
>
> I like, just like, all the other girls expressed, well made, well tailored, basic, classic, not faddy, just good-looking clothes, that you feel elegant in, that's all. That's all I want (3, Jean)

The feeling of elegance suggested comfort, not only physical comfort, but mental comfort – a sense of self-confidence and self-acceptance. Elegance reflected a feeling of ease and a carefree attitude.

> I think somebody else said something about your attitude, being comfortable in what you're wearing. I think that even perhaps if it isn't

> the latest in style or whatever, if you feel comfortable in it, you look elegant. (2, Betty #2)

While all of the women favoured an elegant, tailored silhouette, they each created this style in slightly different ways. They agreed there was more than one way to communicate elegance. Accordingly, the women believed it was important to dress for oneself and through individuality, they achieved a sense of elegance. Individuality meant dressing to suit one's own body shape, facial complexion and hair colour.

> There are so many things that are the same in the stores. It's disquieting, you know…, that you see a whole rack of the same things, you know. You don't want to run into yourself when you go out (3, Elinore).
>
> I do think it's important to buy for your own person. If I wore something that somebody else wore, I might be really self-conscious. I think one has to decide what's good on them…you decide what colours are- you're happy with, and what length of clothes you're happy with wearing, and no matter what the fashion is there's no use going out and getting something that doesn't suit you, just because it, it's in fashion…it's so much a matter of individuality because what feels good on me, wouldn't feel good on somebody else, you know, and what suits me – and I just think, no matter what styles come and go, I usually wear what I want to wear, if I can find it. (3, Muriel)
>
> The one thing that I think is an injustice in our clothing business is the way, you know, they think all you have to do is wear a slack with an elastic waist, and then wear this smock or whatever over it [laughter].

> There's no shape. There's no…there's no individuality to it. It's almost like – (1, Pat).
>
> No elegance. There's no elegance (1, Mae).

The women enjoyed wearing pants; they felt comfortable in pants. Since the feeling of elegance suggested comfort, the freedom that pants provided facilitated the sense of ease and assuredness they desired during participation in their activities.

> Well, I think that most people wear pants, like I've got a skirt on today but I don't wear skirts all the time, I wear pants mostly because they're so much more comfortable and – (3, Venetta).
>
> More freedom (3, Merle).
>
> -more freedom and when you're getting in and out of the car and you don't have to worry about your skirt and – (3, Venetta).
>
> I do [wear them] too, when you're active and doing things (3, Merle).

The women noted that men had long enjoyed this sense of freedom, as expressed through their wearing pants, and they realized the symbolic importance of women's wearing slacks. The women wanted the same sense of freedom that they saw men enjoying; they wanted equality.

> I really think that slacks and short hair are the two most liberating things for women… I really do like to wear slacks and I even wear them to church but not on the days that Margaret E. goes [laughter]. I just think they are so wonderful and all those years the men got away with putting on socks and pulling on trousers and going out the door while we were struggling with- (2, Lorna)

-girdles [laughter] (2, Unknown).

Yeah, and panty hose I think are an abomination. You get one leg in and after that it's a free for all [laughter]. I really do like slacks. I think they're marvelous to travel in. They're nice to gét around in and they're so easy to get on and off (2, Lorna).

The findings presented so far show that the women want to express their identity through the aesthetic attributes of their clothing. In particular they want to convey a strong sense of self, which includes a desire to express their individuality and to look and feel elegant. When they achieve this appearance, the women feel appropriately dressed. However, the women cannot always find the clothing they desire, clothing that accurately communicates their sense of self. In other words, the ready-to-wear clothing available to the women often detracts from their desired identity, instead of enhancing it.

Cohort - "We were depression people"

There is evidence to demonstrate that the women's aesthetic preferences were influenced by their cohort experiences. These women lived through the Great Depression and World War II, periods of economic hardship, which required an attitude of "making do" to survive. This attitude of frugality or "way of thinking" still influences their clothing aesthetics.

I think women now a days are much more style conscious than we were or certainly than our mothers were. (2, Betty #2)

It's a matter of expense too. (2, Lorna)

Well, that's right; they have more money, yes. (2, Frankie)

> We were depression people…there wasn't the money in those days. I wore hand-me-downs; I had three older sisters, by golly! [laughter] (2, Peto).
>
> And many people sewed for their kids and themselves. (2, Betty #2)
>
> I don't know whether I'm strange but I hang onto my clothes. And I've seen young people they're going out and they go to Valu Village, pick out something and they never wear it again. It's a completely different way of thinking. (2, Wendy)
>
> I just keep and keep and keep. (2, Wendy)

The unanimous approval of suits suggests the influence of the depression and the war. The women liked the simple, tailored lines of a suit, reminiscent of the silhouette during the 1930's and 1940's. In addition, the versatility and longevity of suits are style features these women grew up appreciating during times of economic constraint brought about by depression and war.

> I've always worn suits. I go to that more than anything. I like pantsuits because I like the tailored look (1, Addie).
>
> I love tailored things. I think we all do. I find that suits fit the bill, I mean, when it's August and this hot I don't wear my suits, but I would say three seasons of the year I can…you know, in the summer then you have to have some light things.
>
> You can warm a suit up with a sweater or a wool blouse or you can cool it down with, you know, something lighter, but they're very useful. It's safe to wear tailored things, they're going to last. (3, Unknown)

> Yeah, and if you don't know what to wear, you can always wear a suit (2, Lorraine).

Exposure to the tailored silhouette of a work uniform and the military uniform may have influenced the appeal of suits. For some women, wearing uniforms to certain jobs (i.e. nursing or domestic work) during the depression or the war impacted their desire for the clean lines of suits.

> I have always worked in a hospital and stuff and have worn a uniform for years and I still really only like conservative clothes. I have suits; I have skirts and pants (2, Peto).

Even those women who could recall wanting to escape out of their uniforms reported enjoying the simple, classic lines of the suit in their street clothing.

> I was like Peto, I was a nurse and wore uniforms. But to me it was a break to get into street clothes. And I don't like my clothing too conservative, but I like classic lines (2, Lorraine).

The women all expressed a desire for "good fabrics," which they characterized as natural fibers (wool, silk, and cotton). A few of the women appreciated the easy care of synthetic fabrics; however, most of the women enjoyed the drape and physical feel of natural fabrics. The women were brought up wearing clothes made of natural fabrics, and they were accustomed to wearing them.

> Throw away society. That concept doesn't make room for the quality of fabric and yet that's what we were brought up on and that's what we look for (3, Venetta).

I look for fiber, you know, there's something I look at, and I would just not wear that kind of material. (3, Searle)

Some of the materials, I agree with you, Searle…that polyester doesn't breathe, a lot of polyester stuff is, like, out of bounds winter or summer. Natural fabrics are best. (3, Merle)

Yes, I'd like to see more natural fabrics. (3, Venetta)

I like classic styles…but to me fabrics are every bit as important as the style, maybe more important. I like very fine wools…I'd give my eye teeth to get my hands on some cool wool again. It was marvelous to wear. (1, Mae)

Despite the women's desire for natural fabrics, which is characteristic of the late 1930's and 1940's, the women classified their desires as reminiscent of the 1950's and 1960's.

Well, first of all I would want good material. So that would be no polyester. Then I think I would like probably a plain shirtwaister that I could walk in because I take reasonably long strides when I'm walking. And a matching jacket would be great. That means where am I? Back in the fifties? [laughter] (1, Sheelah)

If I had my druthers, like Sheelah, I'd go back to the sixties. [laughter]. Lovely wool dress with a slight A-line that goes down below my knee and a jacket. (1, Dorothy)

Well, I have to agree with Sheelah and Dorothy. When she's speaking about a dress with a jacket, and that is the sixties, they were wonderful!

> They were wonderful; they were so useful. And they looked very good. (1, Mae)

These women were accustomed to making their own clothing or having it made by their mothers or a dressmaker. Their clothing was especially made to fit their bodies. Indeed, they were not reared on ready-to-wear, mass-produced clothing. Instead, they were used to custom-made clothing, which was necessary to achieve the desired tailored silhouette and also meant their clothing was well made and durable.

> As long as it isn't worn out and it still fits, I'll keep wearing it forever…I think this is partly because I was raised on a farm, during the crunch of the Great Depression and my mother was a dressmaker and I never had anything that was bought, until I was in high school practically. So, I like something that fits me right…and I guess I know what I like…buy things that will not be so high style that they're going to be out of style. tomorrow or next year even (3, Muriel).
>
> I like suits. But then I grew up with suits, so you know, that goes back a long way…we had a dressmaker, you see, and she came and she'd make a suit and that would be that. And you wore it then. (1, Margaret)

The women's emphasis on elegance, in describing how they wanted to look and feel, was reminiscent of the feminine social role expectations they were exposed to during the 1930's and 1940's. They learned their appearance was important.

> Image is very important. (2, Claire)
>
> It is. It's important. I think if you develop that young, it goes with you as you grow older. It's important how you look (2, Frankie).

The women learned that through their appearance they could, and perhaps should, mask their feelings, since their priority was to take care of and please others. In other words, they were not to complain, but "make do."

> It's [appearance is] important because if some mornings you don't want to get up in the morning, it really helps if you can find something nice to put on...because it gives you a lift...gets you going for the whole day...otherwise you just sink. (2, Wendy)

The women learned their clothing conveyed a desirable moral character or attitude, such as respectability.

> I really can't add anything to what everybody has said, but...being respectable and, um, sort of conservative, but I think it's...I don't want to be too conservative. (2, Betty #2)

The findings in the cohort context clearly show that how the women wanted to express their identities is impacted by their shared life experiences of depression and war. The period in which they grew up explains the overall style the women desired: simple, classic, tailored lines and one aesthetic attribute, natural fabrics. The experiences of the cohort explain the importance of conveying an image of individuality and elegance – two fundamental pieces of identity for this sample of women. The custom-made clothing they grew with provided them with the opportunity to express their individuality and to ensure their clothing suited their individual bodies and physical features. The elegance they desire reflects the feminine social role expectations of their formative years and the prevailing sense of propriety.

Age – "Mutton dressed as lamb"

In addition to the shared experiences of the cohort, there is evidence that age influenced the women's aesthetic preferences. The women cited their age and concept of age-appropriate dressing when explaining their preferences.

> You know I have a granddaughter that loves to get me into certain things. And I think, okay, Dana, I hate to disappoint you and I'll put it on, but not out…You don't want to look old and dowdy, but you want to look smart but not too young. (2, Frankie)
>
> That's right, not to look as if you're trying to look young. (2, Betty #1)

The women felt it was important to dress stylishly, yet they disdained fashion trends and chastised other older women for attempting to keep up with fashion trends.

> Because you see some ladies…I go with my son once a week and we go shopping and whatever and have lunch out and he'll say to me, "Mom just take a look at that lady, she's trying to be sixteen and she looks older than you are" [laughter]. (2, Frankie)
>
> I don't want somebody else saying…I don't want to be like mutton dressed up as lamb [laughter]. If I'm older,…I like classics, sort of timeless, you know. It has to be over the knees. If the fashions change, I just keep the same classic style. It's people who show off their bosoms and show off their legs and they're not worth showing off [laughter]. I think they discredit our age group (2, Wendy).

> Like the mini skirts, I think they're really cute if they're on the right person, but there are some, you see some mature women trying to wear those mini skirts and, wow, it's a mistake. (3, Venetta)

The belief that women in their age category should not follow fashion trends may arise from the women's shared experience of economic depression and war, which dictated that fashion was wasteful and ostentatious. However, as the previous sections showed, wearing stylish clothes matters to these women. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that their disdain for fashion trends is more about a concern for wearing age-appropriate clothing than a dislike for fashion in general. The key is in understanding their definition of 'fashionable'. For these women, the term fashionable means timeless, classic, enduring garments, as opposed to trendy clothing.

> I think each one has to decide what's good for them…no matter what the fashion is there's no use going out and getting something that doesn't suit you, just because it's in fashion. I like style, but I'm not a victim of fashion (3, Muriel)
>
> At my age I hate trendy things. (3, Elsie)
>
> I like to keep my slacks, skirts, blouses and sweaters for years. (3, Searle)

The women talked about how achieving a sense of appropriate dress, which they described as feeling and looking good, comes with age.

> As far as feeling good, we've had much experience, we're so much older than you [laughter]. You just know. And, uh, you may see something on the rack and you think that would be perfect. You put it on; you know right away…(1, Dorothy)

I think that's what we get as we get older, intuitively we know. (1, Pat)

I think if you buy a simple – something you like, you can wear it and you feel good every time you wear it…that comes with age too. (3, Searle)

For the women, appropriate dress involved concealing body changes that accompany aging, concealing aspects of themselves that they did not want to emphasize.

You want to conceal to a certain extent or not to show- (1, Moderator-Susan)

There are more things that you want to conceal! [laughter] (1, Unknown)

It becomes a game of camouflage, or something [laughter]. (1, Moderator-Linda)

We didn't used to worry about a scandalous shock, then you suddenly realize that you have to worry about it! [laughter] (1, Margaret)

It's just the aging process. (1, Addie)

The women's explanations for each aesthetic attribute that they enjoy reflect what the group considered appropriate dress for women in their age group. The women believed it was not appropriate for women in their age group to wear skirts above their knees.

Well, below the knee for sure. I really think even older women with good legs should not be wearing mini skirts. They can still wear them short enough to show their legs if they want [laughter]. I really think it's almost gross. I just can't see any reason for it. I think young girls look terrific with long, lean legs (2, Betty #2).

> I tell you one thing that bothers most of us probably…I mean we can't afford to wear things that don't flatter us, so we have to have a skirt that's the right length. We can wear the longer ones and we can wear the knee ones, but there's not – even every young person doesn't look good in the mini's and – so you know, that's important because it cuts down your selection. They might have some beautiful clothes if you are forty or less, but forty and more, you just start being a little bit more selective about the length of your skirt (3, Jean).
>
> I specifically think there isn't enough material in skirts now if you're not pencil slim and I don't want them above the knees. I mean that would be cruel to people [laughter] … they are too short for me. (2, Lorna).

The women talked about their upper arms showing signs of aging in decreased muscle tone. Therefore, they wanted long or ¾ length sleeves to cover this physical change.

> You want to find something that goes with your age. You're not a kid anymore. Because as we grow older, we end up with the sag you want sleeves that come down to say roughly to there [pointing to mid-upper arm], not up here [pointing to shoulder] and I'm very conscious of that (2, Frankie).
>
> Yeah, I agree about, well, sleeveless, I don't want anything sleeveless, unless I have a jacket. (2, Betty #2)
>
> Sleeves, a lot of dresses don't have any sleeve, like even if it's just a capped sleeve, it's more flattering once your arms get old. (3, Unknown)

> Let's be honest, when we're old we get all flabby, old ladies got flabby arms and flabby thighs, you know, it's true. It's maddening, you find something and it's sleeveless. (3, Ruth)

The women wanted elasticized waistlines, which comfortably conceal their expanded stomachs, another physiological change accompanying aging.

> I think when you're as old as I am and you tend to have that nice, mature pot [laughter] that the "garbage can" kind of slacks are the easiest. You know, the garbage bag, you know, just a top with elastic around the waist (2, Lorna).
>
> Yeah, I think they're more comfortable too (2, Unknown).

The women wanted the neckline to provide coverage for the growing hump at the back and bottom of their neck, known as the "dowager's hump," another physiological sign of aging. Therefore, none of the women enjoyed scooped necks either at the back or the front.

> I've got mine [neckline] open today, but I feel better when I…I'm very uncomfortable in this to tell you the truth. I'm very conscious of…well, I don't like it being so wide, like this…neck showing at the back; I'm getting a hump (1, Maureen).
>
> I hate things that are scooped because, I don't know about the rest of you, there's a little bit more here [pointing to the back of the neck] than there used to be. The back of the neck is not the greatest place when you're older. (2, Betty #2)

The women distinguished between colours they can and cannot wear now due to their age. They agreed that they could not wear the same colours that they wore when they were younger due to changes in the colour of their hair and complexion. Although the fashionable, brightly coloured materials of the 1940's may have influenced the women's fabric colour preferences, they cited their age as the reason for their love of bright colour.

> I think the bright colours, particularly when you have gray hair and things; you need bright colours to give you some colour. I wear a lot of bright colours. (1, Addie)
>
> I like bright colours. I like them…because I need them. I have absolutely blah colour left in my face and hair and what have you [laughter]. And so, if you don't want to look dead before I am [laughter] and so I do like colour. (1, Mae)

With respect to shoes, the women again cited age as the influencing factor in their shoe preferences. They reluctantly talked about reaching an age when they need to wear flatter, sturdier shoes. The women reported needing safe and comfortable shoes, and such criteria are typically satisfied with a wedge heel and/or laces or buckles, which is inconsistent with the women's sense of style.

> Now I have to wear flat shoes and if you do put on a dress that you think is rather attractive, and then you add shoes that look like herring boxes [laughter] (2, Lorna)
>
> Running shoes don't look nice with a skirt, do they (2, Frankie).

> No, they're just not right, are they…and you know I never aspired to have Scholl's shoes, that isn't one of the things I looked forward to [laughter] and here I am (2, Lorna).

Since coordinating the style of shoe with the style of dress was important to creating a desired look, these women wore slacks more often because the shoes available to them complemented such casual clothing. Some women noted that shoe companies were beginning to recognize their aesthetic needs and were introducing more stylish "sensible" shoes.

> Don't you think shoes have an awful lot to do with it [wearing slacks]? (2, Lorna)
>
> I think one good thing about slacks is they go with sensible shoes. You want to get dressed up and then you think well, I can't wear my clunker shoes, it looks awful. And most of us need sensible shoes (2, Betty, #2).
>
> You'd break your ankle if you get into anything too dressy (2, Lorna).
>
> But that's my problem when I want to wear a skirt. What shoes am I going to wear that would be comfortable and look nice with a dress? If you wear slacks, you can wear a heavier shoe (2, Betty #2).

The findings clearly show that the women's desire to dress for their age influenced their preferences for skirt and sleeve lengths, neck and waistline treatments, fabric colour and shoe style. The women realized they are not young, and their aging bodies prevent them from looking young. At the same time, influenced by an image-conscious, youth-oriented society in which they live, the women wanted to hide overt signs of aging in order to improve their appearance. Therefore, to dress for their age or to

dress appropriately meant reducing the visible signs of aging, but not looking young. Indeed, the women were incensed with and, almost insulted by, women who did not use clothing to conceal their aging bodies, but instead use clothing to try to look young. The women's disdain suggests that they are comfortable with who they are, and they want their clothing to communicate this sense of assuredness.

Lifestyle – "It's a different lifestyle"

Connected to their experience of aging, the women's changing lifestyles impacted their clothing preferences. They wanted clothing appropriate for their current lifestyle. The women were active, participating in physical and social activities. They did not always want to carry a purse with them for reasons of safety and convenience.

> One thing that I would like to see in clothes, uh, I do buy jackets from Eddie Bauer from time to time because, you know, in the winter when I go walking they're really great. And I find it so convenient having an inside pocket for one's wallet…So you can put the wallet in and zip it up and get in your jacket and go out. You don't have to take a handbag or anything like that. And I think that's becoming quite important around here (1, Sheelah).
>
> Yeah, we're just advertising that we have money (1, Pat).

The women also pointed out the importance of pockets for carrying their keys. They lived in apartments and talked about the need to have their keys with them at all times.

> When you live in an apartment you always must have your keys. (1, Dorothy)

> It's a different lifestyle and definitely you can't leave home without them. (1, Addie)

In addition, these women were retired from working outside the home, or were living with a partner, who is retired. This change to a different, non-employment lifestyle impacted their clothing preferences.

> I don't know about some of you but I worked for along time and I still have, 25 years later, perfectly good outfits I worked with. But I don't live that kind of life anymore and it kills me. I wear them occasionally maybe to church once in a while. I think when you get older, especially if you're not going out in the work force, you're inclined to want casual stuff (2, Betty #2).
>
> I don't buy dressy things anymore…I'm not needing the dressy things anymoe. (1, Margaret)
>
> I agree with you, Margaret, that one doesn't have the same social life as you had say when you were working or when your husband was working or that sort of thing. So, consequently your style of clothing is slightly different. Certainly mine is now than it was during my husband's working life. But, um, but you still, you still want to look good. I want to look good. I mean the best I possibly can (1, Mae).

The women also reported a change in their clothing desires and needs when they experienced a change in their marital status.

> I think it's different, too, when you're part of a couple and you're still going out to social functions that are different, and as a widow the last

> couple years I've found my skirts are hanging on the back of my cupboard, because if you go out by yourself, well, you want to wear a walking shoe and you just have to dress differently. You don't have the opportunity to wear the dress-up things, so you may as well pass those by, but everybody enjoys plain, tailored, good-tailored, well-made things. (3, Jean.)

The findings show that women's changing lifestyles, associated with their aging, impacted their clothing aesthetics. Widowhood, retirement from working outside the home, and/or living with a partner, who was retired, meant the women no longer needed "career" and "dressy" clothing. Like cohort, lifestyle impacted the overall look or style the women wanted. Their time was now spent participating in activities that were predominately casual in nature, for example, volunteering, playing cards, travelling and visiting friends and family. Therefore, they required casual clothing. Although their lifestyles were changing, which impacted their clothing aesthetics, they still wanted to look and feel good.

In conclusion, the evidence shows that aesthetics matter to this sample of women, as a means of expressing their identity. The women have a strong sense of identity. They are comfortable with who they are, and they want to wear clothing that conveys this self-acceptance. However, the evidence shows that much of the ready-to-wear clothing available to this age group of women detracts from their ability to express themselves through their dress.

The formal aesthetic attributes the women desire - skirt and sleeve lengths, neck and waistline treatments, fabric type - to express their identities are not unique to this

group of women. However, it appears the meanings associated with the formal attributes are perhaps special to this sample of women. The expressive (feelings) and referential (references to the outside world) aesthetic attributes describe the meaning attached to formal attributes.

The evidence suggests that lifestyle and shared life experiences (cohort) explain the overall style the women desire: simple, classic, tailored lines that are casual and well made. In addition, cohort explains one aesthetic attribute, fabric type, which is necessary to achieve this style. Age, however, explains the remaining formal aesthetic attributes that the women needed to achieve their desired style, which in turn enabled them to communicate their identity.

Since the impact of age on aesthetic preference had not been studied (Eckman, 1997; DeLong, 1997), this study's findings shed new light on the development of aesthetic clothing preferences. The findings suggest that age is a dominant influence on aesthetic preferences, leading to the suggestion that perhaps one's aesthetic preferences change over time in response to age changes. The finding that age impacts aesthetic preferences for expressing identity supports Kaiser's (1997) idea that identity formation is dynamic and that clothing is integral in the ongoing development of identity. In addition, this finding that privileged women aged 70 to 84 want to express comfort with their age, while minimizing the visible signs of aging appears important for clothing designers and manufacturers to consider. Evidence that age impacts clothing aesthetic preferences may impact product development and marketing strategies, particularly for large market segments such as the baby boomers.

Age also appears to impact the women's feelings toward and definition of fashion. The results of this study show that the women wanted to be fashionable, yet they do not want to participate in the social process of fashion by following fashion trends. The women distinguished between being fashionable and following fashion trends. They felt their age group should not follow fashion trends but should dress in age-appropriate stylish clothing. This result supports Fritz-Cook's (1990) finding that older women distinguish between clothing interest and fashion interest. In addition, this finding suggests Behling's (1992) call for an expanded profile of fashion adopters to include older fashion consumers may be misleading, since this sample of women aged 70 to 84 appears to have no interest in adopting current fashions but in sustaining a style they define as fashionable. Furthermore, this finding suggests that conclusions like Katz and Lazarsfeld's (1955) that women's interest in fashion declines as they grow older may be misleading, if the term fashion is not clarified. If not clarified, inferences can be drawn from such conclusions that women are uninterested in stylish clothing, which can fuel cultural stereotypes of older women as unfashionable, which DeLong (1997) found in her work with clothing design students.

The women's unanimous preference for the same style, simple, tailored, classic clothing that will last a long time reflects their shared attitude of frugality and simplicity. This finding supports the conclusions of Reynolds et al. (1998) and Spirduso (1995) that individuals who experienced the Great Depression and World War II collectively share some attitudes and behaviours. In addition, this finding supports DeLong's (1998) conclusion that living through and sharing certain life experiences can produce similar aesthetic responses.

In support of Fiore et al.'s (Part two, 1996) review that the three types of aesthetic attributes are dynamic and interact with one another to form aesthetic preference, the women's choices for formal attributes of line, colour and fabric were combined with associated expressive and referential attributes to form their aesthetic preferences. For example, the women enjoyed A-line skirts cut below the knee and constructed in brightly coloured, natural fabrics. This interactive nature of aesthetic attributes is connected with the Gestalt experience of viewing a form and its parts. Indeed, the women demonstrated a Gestalt experience (the whole is more than the sum of the parts) when describing their preferences. For instance, they talked about the influence of shoes on their desire for casual clothing. They did not want to wear casual shoes with dressy clothing. Although they liked dressy clothing, they did not like the look or style it produced when put together with casual shoes. Also, the women liked a sleeveless top when paired with a jacket but they did not like the sleeveless top on its own.

When describing the aesthetic preferences they wanted, the women associated them with physical features of aging that they did not want to emphasize, including the back and bottom of their neck ("dowager's hump"), their legs above the knee, their arms above the elbow, and their expanding stomachs. Instead, they wanted to conceal these parts of their bodies. In this way, clothing was important to the women as a means of improving their appearance. This finding is supported by Roudabush's (1964) finding that women aged 55 to 65 used clothing to improve their appearance (in Joyner, 1993). This finding also somewhat supports Joyner (1993) and Fritz-Cook's (1990) theoretical suggestion that older women use clothing to improve their appearance in an effort to

conform to a youth-oriented appearance and attractiveness standard. While the women wanted to conceal signs of aging, it appears their primary motivation in using clothing to improve their appearance was to express their identity. Indeed, individuality and elegance, not youth characterized the identity the women wanted to convey. None of the women connected their aesthetic attributes with a desire to create a young look. In fact, the women referred to those women, who tried to look young as "mutton dressed as lamb." Their disdainful comments suggest a sense of indignation and a desire for their age to be respected, not denied. It would appear that the women's indignation is explained by Kaiser's (1997) observation that although older women are participating in public activities longer, this has not led to a societal acceptance of the physical appearance of old age. There is no empirical evidence to support or refute the finding that the women wanted to communicate, through their clothing, comfort with and acceptance of their age. However, feminist activist, Germaine Greer (1991), writes about the frustration she and her friends experience in trying to find ready-to-wear clothing that expresses their identity as confident older women: "There is no accepted style for the older woman; no way of saying through dress and demeanor, 'I am my age. Respect it'" (p. 34).

With regard to ready-to-wear clothing, the women in this study had similar complaints as the women in Shim & Bickle's (1993) study of female catalogue consumers age 55 and over, who reported strong dissatisfaction with available apparel styles and the print and colour of fabrics. In addition, the women in this study reported the same difficulty in finding clothing that fit as the women aged 65 to 80 in a Swedish study reported by Kaiser (1997). The Swedish women complained that they felt forced

into an "old lady style of dressing" (p. 432). Similarly, the women in this study did not like clothing that they thought made them look old. This study's findings support nearly all of the findings in Spruiell & Jernigan's (1982) study of clothing preferences for women aged 65 and older. Neckline and sleeve length preferences were areas of moderate variance and may be accounted for in the samples' different age ranges and climate locations.

While this study supports the research above that documented women's frustration finding appropriate clothing styles and clothing that fits well, it adds to this work by exploring the psychological discomfort the women experienced. Although the importance of suitable clothing to women's psychological well-being has been noted by Smather & Horridge (1979) and Goldsberry et al., (1996), researchers have not explored older women's psychological dissatisfaction with ready-to-wear clothing. In this study, the women's comments suggest that most of the mass produced, retail clothing does not allow them to express their identity in a style they desire – simple, classic, tailored, casual garments (congruent with the period in which they were raised and the lifestyle they now lead). Since this clothing lacks suitable style, it lacks the necessary aesthetic attributes that allow the women to express their identity – self-confidence and comfort with their age. Therefore, this finding supports Lamb & Kallal's (1992) conceptualization of a clothing design model that integrates technical and aesthetic aspects of fit. Their model is user-oriented, and it recognizes the communicative and expressive aspects of dress and the needs of wearers. In other words, it encourages designers to focus on the needs of the client group and create designs that meet their functional, expressive and aesthetic needs.

While the women's desire to express their identity through their clothed appearance supports feminist theories that women's sense of self has been tied to women's appearance (Abu-Laban & McDaniels, 1998; Greer, 1991; deBeauvoir, 1952), this study's findings offer additional insight into women's identities by examining the relationship between appearance and gender. Feminists maintain that since women have historically been raised with the idea that youthful beauty is their source of power, their power is limited, and they will increasingly feel powerless as they age (Abu-Laban & McDaniels, 1998; Greer, 1991; deBeauvoir, 1952). However, on the contrary, the women in this study appeared to be self-assured, not powerless when they spoke with defiance about the need to dress appropriately for their age. Although the women discussed the importance of appearance and the frustration they feel when they cannot accurately convey their identities through their clothed appearance, they did not connect this frustration with feelings of powerlessness. In fact, they passionately described the liberation they found in wearing slacks, the distinguishing dress of the genders. They conveyed a feeling of 'wearing the pants in the family' not a sense of powerlessness. This finding suggests that older women are perhaps not as vulnerable to gender expectations of how they should look as they may have been when they were younger and growing up with the notion that beauty equated to youth and power.

Fritz-Cook (1990) noted most studies of the relationship between self-concept or self-esteem and clothing have been conducted with samples of teenagers or young adults. However, a rare example by Ollinger (1974), involving adults between the ages of 40 to 60, appears to support the finding of the women's desire to express their self-assurance through their clothing (in Fritz-Cook, 1990). Ollinger (1974) concluded that women

sometimes used clothing "symbolically to identify or disidentify with significant others or situations" (in Fritz-Cook, 1990, p. 3). In addition, this finding is supported by Rouse's (1989) argument that clothing expresses one's aspirations to status or one's "social identity" (p. 27). Certainly, it appears that the women in this study liked wearing pants for the physical freedom they provide and the symbolic freedom they represent. In wearing pants, the women may have aspired to identify with men, as a group, and the traditional power they as a group have enjoyed. It would appear then that age impacts the relationship between gender and appearance by lessening the socially constructed gender expectations of appearance.

The women in this study believed that their clothing aesthetics communicated their identities to others, which supports Roach-Higgins & Eicher's (1992) assertion that dress, as a means of communication, serves a social function. With respect to social circumstances, the women reported feeling self-conscious and uncomfortable when they felt inappropriately dressed, which supports Fritz-Cook's finding that women's participation in social activities is negatively impacted by their inability to find appropriate clothing.

In summary, aesthetics matter to women aged 70 to 84. They wanted to dress in stylish clothing, clothing that they define is fashionable. The women wanted to dress in styles that express their identity and comfort with themselves, particularly their comfort with their age. Cohort and lifestyle explain the style the women desire – simple, classic tailored clothing that will last. In addition, cohort explains one aesthetic attribute, natural fabric. Age explains the remaining aesthetic attributes the women preferred and need to create the style they desire – long or ¾ length sleeve, skirt length at or below the knee,

high necklines and moderately tapered waistlines, and bright, solid coloured fabrics. Finally, ready-to-wear clothing is not readily available in the above style and attributes the women desire and therefore detracts from their ability to express themselves.

Table 1

Demographic and Background Survey Results

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age	22*	
Mean = 78 Distribution = 71 - 86		
Education		
First to eight grade	0	0.0
Ninth to twelfth grade	3	14.3
Post-secondary (special training or vocational)	7	33.3
1 to 2 years of university	2	9.5
3 to 4 years of university	5	23.8
5 or more years of university	4	19.0
	21*	99.9**
Employed outside the home		
Yes	23	95.8
No	1	4.2
	24	100.0
Purchase clothing for travel		
Yes	9	39.1
No	14	60.9
	23*	100.0
Clothes to wear to activities		
Yes	20	90.9
No	2	9.1
	22*	100.0

Table 1 Continued

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Health status		
Excellent	8	34.8
Good	9	39.1
Average	4	17.4
Below average	2	8.7
Poor	0	0.0
	23	100.0
Estimate of money spent last year on clothing		
Less than $500	5	21.7
Between $500 and $1000	11	47.8
Between $1000 and $2000	5	21.7
Between $2000 and $3000	2	8.7
Over $3000	0	0.0
	23*	99.9**
Importance of wearing stylish clothing		
Never important	1	4.5
Rarely important	1	4.5
Sometimes important	6	27.2
Often important	5	22.7
Always important	9	40.9
	22	99.8**

*Totals do not equal 24 due to unanswered question or spoiled response.
**Totals do not equal 100 due to rounding.

Chapter V. Implications

This study was designed to meet three objectives. First, the study was intended to inform clothing designers and manufacturers about the nature of the clothing aesthetics of female customers aged 70 to 84. Second, a goal of this study was to understand the importance of aesthetics to the clothing of middle class women aged 70 to 84. Third, it was hoped this study would contribute to the feminist analysis of appearance by examining the impact of age on the relationship between gender and appearance.

Objective One

At the outset of this research, the author assumed that the lack of stylish clothing available to women aged 70 to 84 was perhaps due to their relatively small market size and/or an ageist stereotype and bias in the clothing industry that older women are uninterested in stylish clothing. In either case, the findings in this study should interest clothing designers and manufacturers regarding the market potential of this consumer group of women.

Contrary to stereotypical views of older women as unfashionable and uninterested in clothing, the data show that aesthetics matter to women aged 70 to 84. The women articulated numerous aesthetic attributes that they like and many that they do not like. Notwithstanding their individual aesthetic preferences, the women all wanted to dress stylishly. While cohort and lifestyle influenced aspects of style preference, age seemed to be a more powerful influence on the women's aesthetic clothing preferences than cohort and lifestyle. The findings, therefore, suggest that manufacturers and retailers could market more clothing to this age group by producing tailored garments in natural fabrics with simple, classic lines. Designers need to be aware of skirt and sleeve length

preferences – skirts at or below the knee and ¾ length or long sleeves; along with waistline and colour preferences – moderate, comfortable tapering and solid, bright colours. Also, clothing lines that contain separates may be profitable, given these women enjoy mixing and matching separates, including tops, pants, skirts and jackets. While the women like dresses, they appreciate the style and versatility of suits. Finally, the women reported that combinations of aesthetic attributes in age-appropriate styles are currently difficult to find in retail clothing stores. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings in this study increase the availability of such styles.

Objective Two

The importance of aesthetics to women in this sample was clearly demonstrated in their desire to communicate their identities through the aesthetic aspects of their clothing. The women wanted their clothing to be congruent with their sense of self. Through their clothing, the women make themselves visible - validate themselves such that in a social situation, they reflect a sense of ease and comfort with themselves as older women. When they cannot express themselves in this way through their clothing, the women felt self-conscious and awkward - invalidated. When the women do not have the aesthetic attributes they desire and they feel uncomfortable, their interaction with others may be negatively affected. Therefore, clothing aesthetics are important for women aged 70 to 84 to express and validate their identity and possibly enhance, or at least not detract from, their social interactions.

Objective Three

Feminist theorists have studied the relationship between gender and appearance. Feminists argue that women's identities have been constructed through gender relations

that subordinate women to men and tie women's sense of self to their appearance. Through the value placed on women's appearance, feminists maintain that women's power is linked to their youthful appearance and as such is limited by time, with all women eventually becoming invisible. However, given this study's sample of privileged, white women, only part of this feminist analysis of the relationship between gender and appearance applies to older women.

First, the women in this study did not express a sense of powerlessness and invisibility. On the contrary, they were self-assured and want their clothing to symbolize the comfort they feel with themselves as women. The data in this study, grounded in the women's own voices, validates their experience of clothing aesthetics and in so doing validates their experience as confident women. Therefore, feminist theorists that purport women, as a group, become invisible as they age, need to listen to the voices of individual women, who project a sense of personal liberation found in self-acceptance. Indeed, communicating their sense of self-satisfaction and personal liberation through their clothing embodies the feminist principal: "the personal is political" (Koch & Dickey, 1988).

Second, the women's desire to actively construct their own identities subverts the construction of women's identities by men. The women want to be respected and toward this end, they want to actively define their own identities, construct their own appearance - make themselves visible through their clothing. In so doing, the women are creating healthy "models of old," (Steinem, 1992) which can dispel ageist and sexist stereotypes and impact how society 'sees' older women. In the end, the voices of older women need to be incorporated into feminist theory regarding the relationship between gender and

appearance. Consistent with feminist principles, feminist theory on older women must be grounded in the experiences of older women.

Suggestions for Further Research

Several aspects of this study suggest areas for further research and possible ways to improve future research with older populations of women.

The findings in this study show that age impacts the clothing aesthetics of this sample of privileged, white women. Privileged women were chosen for this exploratory study to ensure the participants could speak to the research question. It was not assumed that these women were the only women for whom aesthetics matter but that economic constraints may impact women's ability to consider aesthetically pleasing clothing. Indeed, the findings in this study show that suitable, age-appropriate ready-to-wear clothing is limited, which suggests women in lower economic categories may have more difficulty expressing themselves through their clothing than women in higher economic categories. Therefore, comparisons between groups of older women from different economic and cultural backgrounds will help to develop our understanding of the impact of economics and/or culture, if any, on the relationship between women's aesthetic clothing preferences and their age.

Given the women in this sample distinguished between being fashionable and following fashion trends, conclusions drawn from previous research regarding older women and fashion might require some clarification to ensure that research participants were operating under definitions of clothing and fashion that researchers intended. Therefore, this finding may aid researchers in the design of future clothing studies

involving women aged 70 to 84 by encouraging them to distinguish between following fashion trends and dressing fashionably or dressing in stylish clothing.

Focus groups proved to be a suitable method for exploring the clothing aesthetics of older women. Incorporating moderators' observations, videotaping focus group discussions and/or conducting a survey following the focus groups would have strengthened the study's findings further. Future clothing research studies will benefit by utilizing methods of triangulation.

This study drew from various theoretical bodies of knowledge – aesthetics, clothing design, gerontology and feminism. The inter-disciplinary nature of this study helped to provide a broad understanding of the complex behaviour of aesthetic clothing response in women aged 70 to 84. The study of clothing and its significance in older women's lives can only be enhanced by further theoretical connections with the fields of gerontology and feminism.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Demographic and Background Survey

DEMOGRAPHIC AND BACKGROUND SURVEY

The purpose of this short survey is to help us describe the people who participate in this study. While we appreciate your filling out the survey, doing so is voluntary. If you do decide to complete the survey, you do not have to answer all questions.

1. In what year you were born? _____

2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ❑ first to eighth grade
- ❑ ninth to twelfth grade
- ❑ post-secondary (special training, vocational or technical school)
- ❑ 1 to 2 years of university
- ❑ 3 to 4 years of university
- ❑ 5 or more years of university

3. Have you ever been employed outside your home?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

If YES, what type of employment?

_____

_____

4. Do you purchase clothing specifically for travelling, including weekend 'getaways'?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

5. Do you have the types of clothes you need or would like to wear to your activities? 'Activities' include: church group activities, social group activities, civic and service group activities, political organization activities, business or professional organization activities, volunteer activities, recreational activities with family and friends.

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

If NO, please indicate for which activity or activities you do NOT have the types of clothing you would like to wear:

- ❑ church group activities
- ❑ social group activities
- ❑ civic and service group activities

- ❑ political organization activities
- ❑ business or professional organization activities
- ❑ volunteer activities
- ❑ recreational activities with family and friends

6. How would you describe your health at the present time?

- ❑ excellent
- ❑ good
- ❑ average
- ❑ below average
- ❑ poor

7. How much money would you estimate you spent on your clothing last year?

- ❑ less than $500
- ❑ between $500 and $1000
- ❑ between $1000 and $2000
- ❑ between $2000 and $3000
- ❑ over $3000

8. How important it is to you to wear stylish clothing?

- ❑ never important
- ❑ rarely important
- ❑ sometimes important
- ❑ often important
- ❑ always important

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

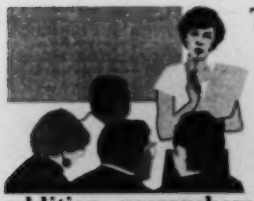
Appendix B

Information Poster

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA RESEARCH STUDY

We are doing a study on the clothing preferences of older women and need your help!

If you were born between 1915 and 1929, we would like to talk to you.



The purpose of this study is to learn about the clothing styles and types of fashions older women want to wear. Researchers at the University of Alberta want to know about the specific style features older women enjoy wearing. In particular, researchers are interested in learning about the preferences of women born between 1915 and 1929. In addition, researchers want to find out about the availability of such styles in the ready-to-wear clothing industry.

Participation in this research requires discussing your clothing style preferences in a group of 6 to 10 women led by two University of Alberta researchers. A group discussion will last about one and one-half to two hours and will be tape recorded for analysis purposes. These tapes will be destroyed/erased after the study is completed and all data have been analyzed. Your individual identity will be kept confidential, as only first names will be used to address participants during a group discussion. Upon completion of the group discussion, you will be asked to fill out a short survey. The results of the study will be shared with you when the project is completed.

Susan Nurse can answer any questions you may have about this research. You can contact Susan c/o of Linda Capjack at 492-5997.

If you would like more information about participating in this study, please tear off and fill out the bottom portion of this sheet and drop it in the participation box. Susan Nurse will then contact you to discuss the study further and to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Name:

Telephone number:

Convenient time to call you:

Appendix C

Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT: Identification of the clothing aesthetics of women aged 70 to 84

INVESTIGATORS: Linda Capjack (403) 492-5997 and Susan Nurse (306) 584-3005

INFORMATION SHEET:

The purpose of this study is to learn about the clothing styles and types of fashions older women want to wear. In particular, researchers are interested in learning about the preferences of women born between 1915 and 1929. In addition, researchers want to find out about the availability of such styles in the ready-to-wear clothing industry.

Participation in this research requires discussing clothing style preferences in a group of 6 to 10 women led by a University of Alberta researcher. This focus group discussion will last about one and one-half to two hours and will be audio taped for analysis purposes. Individual identities will be kept confidential, as only first names will be used to address participants during the group discussion. Upon completion of the group discussion, each participant will fill out a short survey. The results of the study will be shared with you when the project is completed.

CONSENT:

I acknowledge that the research procedures described on the Information Sheet (attached or above) have been explained to me, and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. In addition, I know that I may contact the person designated on this form, if I have further questions either now or in the future. I have been informed of the alternatives to participation in this study. I understand the possible benefits of joining the research study, as well as the possible risks and discomforts. I have been assured that personal records relating to this study will be kept confidential. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to myself. I understand that if any knowledge gained from this study is forthcoming that could influence my decision to continue in this study, I will be promptly informed.

_____
Name of Participant

_____
Signature of Participant

_____
Name of Witness

_____
Signature of Witness

_____
Date

_____
Signature of Investigator

The person who may be contacted about this research is Susan Nurse
c/o Linda Capjack, M.Sc.

Phone Number: 492-5997